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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
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LEJ [REDACTED]
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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Fidel Castro's 19 April Speech

1. Fidel Castro's 19 April speech, which contained his first strong attack on the Johnson administration, suggests that he has concluded that he must wait until after next November before he can expect any result from his feelers for a "normalization" in relations with the United States. The speech probably presages another diplomatic offensive against the United States. He stated that his government intends to deliver another note to the United Nations denouncing various "provocations and violations" against Cuba by the United States. He detailed in this connection a series of alleged provocations by US personnel at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base. Beyond this, he alluded only in passing to violations of Cuban airspace and in a very general way to unspecified "aggressions."

2. These actions, together with evidence that the United States is following a more "reactionary" policy in Latin America generally under the new administration, demonstrate the "increasing aggressiveness" of the United States, Castro charged. Apparently referring to the note he said would be sent to the UN, Castro stated that "we must warn the world" and demonstrate that the responsibility for whatever may happen belongs to the US. As for Cuba, he shouted, "we shall not change nor shall we hesitate in the face of whatever risks may be necessary... if they want war, we are not afraid." He called on the Cuban armed forces--including specifically "our surface-to-air missiles"--to be prepared for any eventuality.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4


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By 442, NARA, Date 10-26-87

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3. No action by the United States in recent weeks would seem to call for the kind of response that Castro made in this speech. Neither is there any evidence that he may be facing some new domestic challenge or problem which, in his mind, calls for the invocation of the handy US scapegoat. Although the recent potentially explosive trial of Marcos Rodriguez revealed deep divisions within the leadership of the regime, there is every indication that Castro himself emerged in a position of continued personal predominance.

4. It is possible that Castro's new attack on the US was related to US aerial-surveillance and the turnover of the SAM system to Cuban control, which is expected shortly. There is no good indication in the speech that this was his intention: his allusions to violations of Cuban airspace were passed over lightly. However, such indications would not necessarily be apparent in his speech. US press agencies, incidentally, have magnified Castro's passing allusion to violations of Cuban airspace far beyond what is justified on the basis of the full text of Castro's remarks.

5. A study of Castro's past speeches--which are almost always delivered extemporaneously and without notes--indicates that he frequently reveals in them the problems and worries which happen to be uppermost in his mind at the time. It was apparent in his Sunday speech that Castro regards the recent rebellion in Brazil as a serious setback for Cuba. He devoted considerable time to the Brazilian revolt and called it "part of the long-range strategy of imperialism against Cuba." He said Cuba can expect additional efforts to isolate it in this hemisphere. Castro's clearly evident concern with Brazilian developments, which he obviously regards with foreboding, could well have dictated the tenor of his speech.

6. It was a coincidence that Castro's 19 April speech was delivered on the same day that his interview with ABC correspondent Liza Howard was televised in the United States. That interview was taped last February. There was nothing inconsistent in his two statements, though the Liza Howard

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interview stressed the themes Castro had been emphasizing earlier this year--confidence in Cuba's domestic and international prospects and interest in ultimately reaching some kind of normalization in his relations with the United States. The difference is solely a matter of emphasis: even in his 19 April speech, Castro stated "if they (the US) want peace with our nation, there will be peace." But his emphasis this time was on the other half of the sentence: "...if they want war, we are not afraid."

7. There is every reason to believe that Castro will continue making unofficial feelers toward "normalization" of relations with the United States. However, his 19 April speech strongly suggests that he has little expectation that these feelers will have any positive result until after the US elections and that therefore he sees no reason to maintain a conciliatory climate in Havana at this time. He quite openly stated in his interview with Liza Howard that he foresaw no change in US policy toward Cuba until after the US elections, since Cuba has become a partisan political issue in the United States. Nevertheless, Castro is likely to keep open the channels he has to the US Government [REDACTED] 5, 5, 9 in the expectation that these will later become useful.

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